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BUDDHISM

ANNIE BESANT

ADYAR

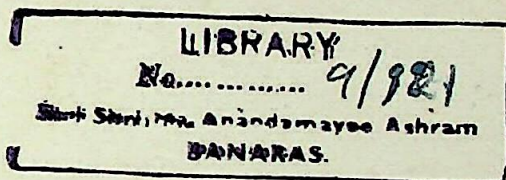
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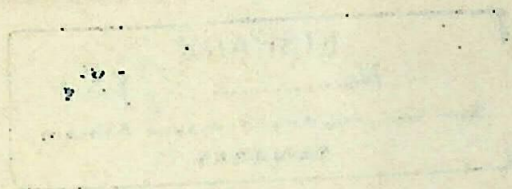


BY
ANNIE BESANT

1963

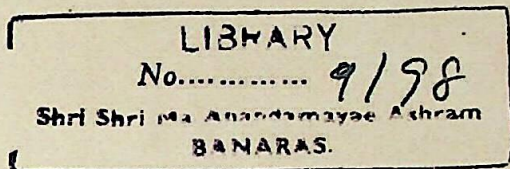
THE THEOSOPHICAL PUBLISHING HOUSE

ADYAR, MADRAS 20, INDIA



PRINTED IN INDIA

At the Vasanta Press,
The Theosophical Society, Adyar, Madras 20.



PUBLISHER'S NOTE

THIS is a separate reprint of the third Convention lecture delivered in 1896, at Adyar, Madras, on the Twenty-first Anniversary of The Theosophical Society, the President-Founder, Colonel H. S. Olcott being in the Chair. The other three lectures were on Hinduism, Zoroastrianism and Christianity. The "Foreword" was added when the four lectures were printed together in January 1897.

A second series of four lectures on Islam, Jainism, Sikhism, and Theosophy or the Divine Wisdom as the common source of all religions, were given in 1901 at the Twenty-sixth Anniversary, Colonel Olcott again presiding.

A. A.

FOREWORD

THE following lectures do not pretend to be anything more than popular expositions of four great faiths, and are intended for the ordinary reader rather than for the student. Delivered to audiences composed almost entirely of Hindus, with only a sprinkling of Zoroastrians and Christians, they rather take for granted a knowledge of Sanskrit terms; so notes have been added where obscurity might arise from their use. They are intended to help members of each of the four religions to recognize the value and beauty of the three faiths which are not their own, and demonstrate their underlying unity. In the lecture on Buddhism I had especially in mind the misconceptions which shut the Lord Buddha out from the hearts of His countrymen, and strove to remove them by quotations from the received Scriptures containing the authoritative records of His own words. For indeed I know of no

greater service that could be rendered to religion than to draw together again these sundered faiths, which almost divide between them the Eastern world. Mother and daughter they are, and family feuds are proverbially bitter; yet might the quarrel be healed, if the desire for amity reigned on both sides. Less deeply rooted, but more bitter, was the antagonism to Christianity, exasperated by the ignorant and often coarse and abusive attacks levelled by the lower class of missionaries against the venerable faith held by nearly all my hearers. Yet they listened respectfully and after a while sympathetically to the exposition of the faith so young in comparison with their own, and finally recognized that it also was a great religion, and was not really alien from Hinduism. I can wish these lectures no better fate than that they may act as a message of peace to the hearts of their readers, as they evidently did to the hearts of their hearers.

The general principles underlying these lectures are the following: Each religion is looked at in the light of occult knowledge, both as regards its history and its teachings. While not despising the conclusions arrived at by the

patient and admirable work of European scholars, I have unhesitatingly flung them aside where they conflict with important facts preserved in occult history, whether in those imperishable records where all the past is still to be found in living pictures, or in ancient documents carefully stored up by Initiates and not wholly inaccessible. Especially is this the case with regard to the ages of Hinduism and Zoroastrianism, touching which modern scholarship is ludicrously astray. That scholarship, however, will regard the occult view as being, in its turn, grotesquely wrong. Be it so. Occultism can wait to be justified by discoveries, as so many of its much-ridiculed statements as to antiquity have already been; the earth is a faithful guardian, and as the archæologist uncovers the cities buried in her bosom many an unexpected witness will be found to justify the antiquity that is claimed.

Secondly, each religion is treated as coming from the one great Brotherhood, which is the steward and custodian of spiritual knowledge. Each is treated as an expression, by some member or messenger of that Brotherhood, of the eternal spiritual truths, an expression suited

to the needs of the time at which it was made, and of the dawning civilization that it was intended to mould and to guide in its evolution. Each religion has its own mission in the world, is suited to the nations to whom it is given, and to the type of civilization it is to permeate, bringing it into line with the general evolution of the human family. The failure to see this leads to unjust criticism, for an ideally perfect religion would not be suitable to imperfect and partially evolved men, and environment must always be considered by the Wise when They plant a new slip of the ancient tree of Wisdom.

Thirdly, an attempt is made to distinguish the essential from the non-essential in each religion, and to treat chiefly the former. For every religion in the course of time suffers from accretions due to ignorance not to wisdom, to blindness not to vision. Within the brief compass of these lectures, it was not possible to distinguish in detail, nor to point out all the numerous non-essentials. But the following tests may be used by any one who desires to guide himself practically in discriminating between the permanent and the

transitory elements in any religion. Is it ancient, to be found in the ancient Scriptures? Has it the authority of the Founder of the religion, or of the Sages to whom the formulation of the particular religion is due? Is it universal, found under some form in all religions? As regards spiritual truths, any one of these tests is sufficient. As to smaller matters, matters of rites and ceremonies, observances and customs, the use or disuse of any particular practice, we may ask as to each: Is it laid down or recommended in the ancient Scriptures, by the Founder or His immediate disciples? Can its usefulness be explained or verified by those in whom occult training has developed the inner faculties which make the invisible world a region they know by their own experience? If a custom be of modern growth, with only a century, or two or three centuries, behind it, if it be local, not found in any ancient Scripture, nor justified by occult knowledge, then—however helpful it may be found by any individual in his spiritual life—it should not be imposed on any member of a particular religion as binding on him as a part of that religion, nor should a man be looked at askance for

non-compliance with it. This fact especially needs enforcement in India, where customs that are entirely local, or very modern, are apt to be identified with Hinduism in the minds of their followers, and any Hindus who do not accept them are looked upon as somewhat inferior, even as unorthodox. Such customs, even if much valued and found useful by their adherents, should not be considered as generally binding, and should fall into the class of non-essentials. It has been well said that while in things essential there should be unity, in things non-essential there should be liberty, and in all things there should be charity. Were that wise rule followed by each, we should hear less of the religious antagonisms and sectarian disputes that bring shame on the very word "religion." That which ought to unite has been the ever-springing source of division, until many have impatiently shaken off all religion as being man's worst enemy, the introducer everywhere of strife and hatred.

May this little book, sent out with reverence for all religions that purify man's life, elevate his emotions, and comfort him in sorrow, be a message of peace, and not a stirring-up of

strife; for I have striven to sketch each religion in its best, its purest, and most occult form, and each as though I belonged to it and were preaching it as my own. To the Theosophist "nothing that is human is foreign," and he has only reverent sympathy for every expression of man's longing after God. He seeks to understand all, to convert none, and in offering to share the knowledge with which he has been entrusted, he hopes to deepen every man's faith by adding to his faith knowledge, and by unveiling the common foundation which supports all religions.

Owing to pressure of time many quotations, supporting the positions taken, were either summarized or omitted in the spoken lectures. They have been inserted in their proper places, together with a few points that were in the original notes but were also omitted for lack of time.

ANNIE BESANT

ADYAR

January 3rd, 1897

BUDDHISM

BROTHERS,—As you well know, the religion known as Buddhism is the religion which has the largest number of adherents in the world. Despite all difficulties of accurate statistics we may take it that about one-third of the human race follow the teachings of the Buddha, and in Europe a very large amount of attention has been drawn to these teachings by the devoted work of a number of orientalists who have been fascinated by the charm of the Buddha Himself, by the purity, by the elevation of His teachings. For many reasons into which I cannot now go in detail, Buddhism has greater attraction for the European mind than either Hinduism or Zoroastrianism—Buddhism especially in the form in which it is taught in the southern Church. The northern Church—Buddhism as it is found in Tibet and China—is so closely allied to Hinduism in its teaching as to the Gods, as to

the continuing Ego, as to the life after death, as to rites and ceremonies, as to the use of Sanskrit mantras, that it has less attraction for the European. For you must remember that the European has a mind which is essentially practical rather than metaphysical, and that he is inclined to be repulsed by much talk about the invisible world, and by much teaching which refers to the more mystic side of religion. In the southern Church this mystic side in course of time has apparently disappeared to a very great extent, at least so far as the translations are concerned that the Europeans possess. Books which deal with the more mystic side are not yet translated, and therefore are not before the European public. What they recognize as Buddhism is a system of wonderful ethics, couched in the most beautiful and in the most poetical language; they recognize in it these moral teachings coupled with rare liberality of thought, with the constant appeal to the reason, with the constant attempt to justify and render intelligible the foundations on which the morals are built; and this appeals very strongly to the minds of many Europeans,

who have turned aside from the cruder presentments of religion that are current in Europe, and who seek in Buddhism a refuge from the complete scepticism to which otherwise they would feel themselves doomed.

Now with regard to the teachings of Buddhism, I shall found myself on the Buddhist Scriptures themselves, for that is the fairest way of dealing with a faith; and then, as always, looking at these in the light of occult knowledge, I shall try to show you how consistent they are with the noblest teachings of other faiths, with the essential truths of religion, and how it is very largely owing to misconception, to misrepresentation, to the small extent, we may say, to which some of the later disciples have expounded the teachings of the Buddha—it is largely in consequence of these misconceptions and omissions that in the land which was His birthplace, amongst the people to whom by race He belonged, His doctrines are now looked upon with so much of suspicion, and scarcely any are found to accept His teachings, or willing to call themselves by His name. Daughter of Hinduism, Buddhism most undoubtedly is,

daughter of the ancient faith, born in comparatively modern times, and if rightly read the Buddhist Scriptures are the echo of the Hindu Scriptures, and the teachings—though often thrown into a less metaphysical and a more directly practical form—are teachings that are penetrated with the Hindu spirit, as indeed you might expect, remembering the lips that spake them. The form into which they were thrown is specially adapted for spreading these truths outside the limits of India itself, a form which, by the fore-knowledge of the Buddha, was made to carry the teachings of the purest Hindu morality into many a country outside the limits within which Hinduism would be taught, intended to spread it through populations less keenly metaphysical and less intellectual than those of the Hindu people. We find here, as I say, the fundamental verities, though the form into which they are thrown is simpler, and is in many ways perhaps more directly practical. The mission of the Buddha—while it began in India with the hope perchance that the whole work might go on in harmony and without disruption—was intended to carry

the light of truth to other peoples, a mission that has been triumphantly fulfilled, and that, we may hope, will continue to be fulfilled for many an age to come.

Now the essential teachings of the Buddha are contained in the three great divisions of Buddhist sacred literature, the three Pitakas, or baskets, as they are called. The first of this is the Vinaya, and contains all the rules laid down for the monastic order that He established, the famous Sangha, the guardian and repository of His religion. In addition to the rules of discipline, we have also in this Vinaya a large number of teachings given by the Buddha, more mystical in their character than those of some of the other volumes; being specially intended for the training of the monastic order, specially intended for the teaching of the disciples, these books speak out more plainly as to the invisible world than do some others; they give out more fully what is regarded by the materializing West as the legendary side of Buddhism; but this is really a true and essential part of Buddhist teaching, and, as was said long afterwards by Nāgārjuna: “ ‘ Every Buddha

has both a revealed and a mystic doctrine.' The exoteric is for the multitude of new disciples. The esoteric is for the Bodhisattvas and advanced pupils, such as Kāshyapa. It is not communicated in the form of definite language, and could not, therefore, be transmitted by Ānanda, as definite doctrine among the Sūtras. Yet it is virtually contained in the Sūtras. For instance, the *Fa-hwa-king*, or 'Sūtra of the Lotus of the Good Law', which is regarded as containing the cream of the revealed doctrine, is to be viewed as a sort of original document of the esoteric teaching, while it is in form exoteric."¹ When the Buddha was seventy-one years of age, He expounded the esoteric doctrine in answer to the questions put to him by His great disciple Kāshyapa, and although, as Mr. Edkins says, this doctrine could not be fully put into language—for always the esoteric doctrine, being spiritual, is beyond intellectual language—none the less can it be deduced from the Sūtras. The second of these three Pitakas consists of Sūtras, or Suttas, as they are generally called—because the Buddha is supposed

¹ Chinese Buddhism, by Rev. J. Edkins, p. 43.

to have spoken in Prākṛit, the common dialect derived from Sanskrit, which is now called Pāli. The Suttas form that part of the Buddha's teachings which were given to the people, His ethical teachings, and discussions, disputations, questionings, explanations, arising out of them, and out of circumstances that He met with in His daily life. Here are the great records of the life and teachings of the Buddha, showing that life as it was lived in India, and those teachings as they fell from His sacred lips. The third Pitaka is the Abhidhamma, of which very little is known at present in the West. It is said to be full of mysticism, and to contain the Buddhist philosophy as apart from the Buddhist ethics. But that I must leave on one side, as unreachable by us, and there is plenty of matter in the other two Pitakas to take up very much more than all the time at our disposal.¹

¹ Dr. Rhys Davids says: "The books, as we have them, were put into their present shape . . . in the century or two after the death of Gotama" (*Buddhism*). At the Council of Rājagriha, under Kāshyapa and Ananda, held immediately after the death of the Buddha, "Buddhism" may be said to have been organized. At the second Council, that of Vaishālī, under Yashas and Revata, held 377 B.C., the dissentients rejected the Abhidhamma, but the disputes it was called to settle were merely on certain points in the Discipline of the Sangha. The third Council, under Ashoka, at

In considering how I should lay this great teaching before you, what would be the form which would make it at once most attractive and most instructive, I decided that it would be best to put it in the way that we may say it originally came to the people who listened to the Buddha Himself, for His teaching is so interwoven with His life, its beauty and its fascination depend so largely on the One who uttered it, and on the marvellous perfection of that many-sided life, that to describe it as a mere dry system, apart from the life of the Blessed One, seems to deprive it of its inspiring force, to deprive it of its greatest influence over the lives of man.

Let me remind you, at the very outset, of the way in which the Buddha is looked upon, alike by His own disciples, by every occultist, and by every one who knows anything of the invisible world, and of the way in which the position of a Buddha is gained. Many a hundred incarnations went before that final incarnation in which the illumination of the Buddha was attained. Step by step He

Pāṭaliputta in 242 B.C., again left the Pitakas unchallenged, so that we may fairly take them as representing accurately the doctrines of the great Teacher.

climbed up the long ladder of existence; life after life of self-sacrifice and devotion led Him from earthly manhood to divine humanity, from divine humanity to the position of a Bodhisattva, from the position of a Bodhisattva to that of a Buddha. The Buddha is said to have perfected His vow kalpa after kalpa. Immeasurable ages of innumerable lives lay behind Him ere He was born in the town of Kapilavāstu, in the palace of the King, born for His last birth upon this planet, born to reach the perfect illumination, and to become one of the series of supreme Teachers of Gods and men. In the valley of the Ganges, about a hundred miles to the north-east of the sacred city of Benares, this Child was born, and it is said, and truly said, that all nature rejoiced over His birth-hour, knowing the work He had come to accomplish in the world. It is said that Devas showered flowers on the mother and the Child, that the rejoicing shook all the worlds of Gods and men, for the Child that was born was to be a mighty Teacher, the instructor of myriads and myriads of the human race. The date of His birth is put by the Sinhalese at 623 B.C.; at

685 B.C. by the Siamese.¹ He was named by His parents Siddhārtha, "He who has accomplished His purpose"; that name was given because of a prophecy made by a great Brāhmaṇa soon after His birth, that the Child should be a mighty teacher and an enlightener of the nations of the earth. He grew up during His youth apparently in ignorance of His mighty destiny. It is a strange problem that has pressed on many minds how it is that with some of the greatest who are born into the world, the knowledge of their own greatness is for a time veiled. You may remember it was the same with Rāma. He did not in His early days show any knowledge that He was an Avatāra of the Supreme; He was taught by Vasishtha, and from him received in His then body the knowledge of true Yoga. So also with the Buddha; as we trace Him through the beautiful life he led as a boy, as a youth, up to the date of his marriage with his cousin, and for still a year or two afterwards, we see him leading indeed a noble, a beautiful and a pure life, but a life that did not apparently

¹ Dr. Rhys Davids says it "may be fixed approximately at about 600 B.C." • *Buddhism*, p. 20.

recognize its own greatness, with the mind turned to the invisible world but not yet realizing its mission nor the part it had to play. We read how His father, longing that He should be the King of earth rather than the monarch over millions of minds of men in the spiritual world, tried to keep back from Him the knowledge of the suffering that was going on in the world around. He environed Him on all sides with all that was fair and delightful, in order that the knowledge of the sorrow of the world might be shut out from His eyes. We read how, by the guiding of a Deva, He was led to go forth from His palace and the pleasure-garden that surrounded it, and driving in His chariot He met four men who gave Him the first touch of the awakening. First, He met a man who was aged, and up till this time He had never seen but the young; He asked what was this man, half-blind, tottering, and palsied, with a wrinkled face, with weakness in every limb; and His charioteer answered, he was an aged man, and that to all that were born into the world age must come in time. He met a man suffering from horrible disease; He had seen nothing but health

and beauty, and He asked what was this; the charioteer told him, this is disease, under which many of the children of men must suffer. He met a corpse, He who had seen nothing but the living, and He asked what was this; and the charioteer said, it is death, to which all who are living must come. And lastly He met an ascetic, calm, serene, and peaceful, full of happiness, full of peace, and he asked how it was that in a world where there were disease and death this man could walk through the world serene. He was answered that this man had a life beyond the life of men, a life fixed in the eternal; hence his peace, his serenity, his calm in the midst of sorrow. And going back to His palace the prince reflected, and from His lips broke forth the cry: "Full of hindrance is this household life, the haunt of passion; free as the air is the homeless state." That idea fastened on Him—the contrast between the haunt of passion and the homeless man; until at last, rising in the night when wife and child were sleeping beside Him, He bent over the young wife, beautiful in her sleep, and over the babe that lay beside her in the first tenderness of

its youth, and touching them not, lest He should awaken them and their cry should shake His purpose, He went forth from the palace of His father, called His faithful chariot-
eer to bring his horse, and went through the silent sleeping city, through the quiet streets of the deserted town, until, coming to the gates of the city, He dismounted from His horse, gave it to the charioteer and bade him lead it back to the palace, stripped off His princely garments, cut off His hair, and went forth alone, homeless, to seek for the cause of human sorrow and for its cure. He who was to be the Buddha could not live in joy and happiness in the palace of the King, while men outside were suffering, were agonizing and were dying; He went out to seek the cause of the suffering, and the cure which He might bring to human woe.

Then we trace Him in the search He made after divine wisdom. First going to great recluses, to Alāra Kālāma and Uddaka, He tried to learn from them the secret; they were learned in philosophy, in religion, and He sought to learn from them the cause and the cure of sorrow. He studied the mysteries of

philosophy, He sat at their feet learning all the intricacies of metaphysics, and at last, despairing, He arose, feeling that not there was the cure of sorrow, not by mere intellectual learning should the salvation of men be found. Going onwards, He met five ascetics, and for six years He gave Himself to the ascetic life, practising penances greater than any other practised, reducing His food at last to a mere grain a day, until finally He fell, emaciated, fainting and helpless, worn out by the rigour of His austerities. A passing girl, Nandā, brought Him rice and milk; He took the food and arose refreshed, and when His comrades saw that He had taken food, they turned from Him, saying: "This ascetic is going back to the world, he is weary of austerity and is unworthy of the sacred vocation." And they left Him, and again He went forth alone, to find in solitude the secret of human woe.

As He was wandering on His ways, the time approached when illumination was to be found, and reaching Gayā, He sat down beneath the sacred Ashvattha tree, saying that He would never rise from his seat until light had dawned

upon His spirit and the secret of sorrow was found. He sat there patiently, and all the hosts of Māra, the evil ones, assailed Him with temptations of pleasure and with threats of pain; all the Asuras gathered round Him, seeking to shake His constancy and to modify his determination. He sat, clad in the garment of pure resolution, untouched, unshaken, even when the image of His weeping wife appeared before Him, with outstretched arms pleading that He would turn His face backward to the world again. At last in the silent hour the illumination came. As He sat beneath the sacred tree, there dawned on Him the light which He had been born into the world to discover; there came to Him that mighty awakening which made Him the Enlightened, the Buddha, which told Him of sorrow, of the cause of sorrow, of the cure of sorrow, of the path which leads beyond it; Buddhahood was achieved, a Saviour of the world was there. And then there breaks from His lips the song triumphant, that must be familiar to many amongst you: "Looking for the maker of this tabernacle, I shall have to run through a course of many births, so long as I do not find

(him); and painful is birth again and again. But now, maker of the tabernacle, thou hast been seen; thou shalt not make up this tabernacle again. All thy rafters are broken, thy ridge-pole is sundered; the mind, approaching the Eternal, has attained to the extinction of all desires.”¹

That was the secret of the Buddha—that by the extinction of desires man rises to peace. Under the tree of wisdom He had seen the sorrow of the world, its cause in desire, its end in the ending of desire, and the noble eight-fold path which led out of it into peace eternal. Seeing it for Himself and for the race, He passed into Nirvāna, the uncreated, the passionless, the all-embracing. And when the Blessed One had thus entered into Nirvāna, He sat beneath the Bodhi tree for seven days, “enjoying the bliss of emancipation.”²

During the night closing the seventh day, He “fixed His mind upon the chain of

¹ *Dhammapada*, 153, 154. Sacred Books of the East, Vol. X, translated by Max Müller.

² *Mahāvagga*, I, i, 7. The account of this period may be read in the Sacred Books of the East, Vol. XIII, *Vinaya Texts*, translated from the Pāli by Drs. Rhys Davids and Oldenburg. Or, as regards the teaching of the Bhikkhus, it will found in Vol. XI, *Buddhist Suttas*, translated by Dr. Rhys Davids, in *Dhammachakkappavattana-Sutta*.

causation” and traced the evolution of the universe, expressing it in the twelve Nidānas, the succession of which shows the order of the stages, until we reach the suffering we find around us; the first is Avidyā, “ignorance,” *i.e.*, limitation, the primary cause—because without this limitation in All-Consciousness, by the action of the Supreme, no universe, no variety, can arise. From Avidyā come the Samkhāras, from these Consciousness, then Name and Form, then the six Powers of Perception, from these Contact, from Contact Sensation, from Sensation Desire, from Desire Attachment, from Attachment, “Existence”—*i.e.*, personality—from this Birth, and from Birth Decay, with all the sorrows of life.¹ These form the evolutionary chain, and, properly understood and unfolded, contain the whole philosophy of the evolving universe, and its returning path.

Arising from His seat under the Bodhi tree, the Buddha sat under a banyan tree for another seven days, at the end of which, in answer to a Brāhmana, He spoke words that explain His whole attitude to Brāhmanas: “That

¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

Brāhmana who has removed (from himself) all sinfulness, who is free from haughtiness, free from impurity, self-restrained, who is an accomplished master of knowledge (or of the Veda), who has fulfilled the duties of holiness, such a Brāhmana may justly call himself a Brāhmana, whose behaviour is uneven to nothing in the world.”¹

For two more periods of seven days each, the Buddha sat under two other trees, and then He took food from two merchants, who became His first disciples. Returning to His seat under the banyan tree, a strange scene occurred. “In the mind of the Blessed One, who was alone, and had retired into solitude, the following thought arose: ‘I have penetrated this doctrine which is profound, difficult to perceive and to understand, which brings quietude of heart, which is exalted, which is unattainable by reasoning, abstruse, intelligible (only) to the wise.’² This people, on the other hand, is given to desire, intent upon desire, delighting in desire. To this people,

¹ *Ibid.*, ii, 2.

² Yet people fancy that Buddhism is a simple ethical system, founded wholly on reason, and capable of being grasped in its entirety by the unspiritual!

therefore, who are given to desire, intent upon desire, delighting in desire, the law of causality and the chain of causation will be a matter difficult to understand; most difficult for them to understand will be also the extinction of all Samkhāras, the getting rid of all the substrata (of existence), the destruction of desire, the absence of passion, quietude of heart, Nirvāna. Now if I proclaim the doctrine, and other men are not able to understand my preaching, there would result but weariness and annoyance to me.' And then the following.....stanzas, unheard before, occurred to the Blessed One: 'With great pains have I acquired it. Enough! Why should I now proclaim it? The doctrine will not be easy to understand to beings that are lost in lust and hatred. Given to lust, surrounded with thick darkness, they will not see what is repugnant (to their minds), abstruse, profound, difficult to perceive and subtle.'¹

At this crisis Brahmā Sahampati (the third Logos of our chain) intervened, seeing that "the mind of the Tathāgata, of the holy, of

¹ *Ibid.*, v, 2, 3.

the absolute Sambuddha inclines itself to remain in quiet, and not to preach the doctrine." He tells the Buddha that some will understand and reminds Him of the suffering earth: "Look down, all-seeing One, upon the people lost in suffering, overcome by birth and decay, Thou who hast freed thyself from suffering! Arise, O hero, O victorious One! Wander through the world, O Leader of the pilgrim band,¹ who thyself art free from debt. May the Blessed One preach the doctrine; there will be people who can understand it!" And so He looked on the world, with the eye of a Buddha, full of compassion, and saying: "Wide open is the door of the immortal to all who have ears to hear; let them send forth faith to meet it. The Dhamma sweet and good I spake not, Brahmā, despairing of the weary task, to men."²

He then arose, and whither did He go, to commence His beneficent mission? He went to the sacred city whence spiritual missions have ever started in India; he went to Kāshī, to the holy spot whence the spiritual life of

¹ The hosts of reincarnating Egos, held in debt by Karma.

² *Ibid.*, 4-10.

India has ever taken its rise; and there in Isipatana, in the deer-park of the city of Benares, He set rolling the wheel of the Law. Here were dwelling the five ascetics who had turned their backs on him. To them He went, and announcing Himself as Sambuddha, He told them that the two extremes of self-indulgence and of constant self-mortification were alike profitless, and that, avoiding these, He had trodden "the middle path, which leads to insight, which leads to wisdom, which conduces to calm, to knowledge, to the sambodhi,¹ to Nirvāna." This middle path is the holy or noble eightfold path, the fourth of the "Four Noble Truths." It is; Right Belief, Right Aspiration, Right Speech, Right Conduct, Right Livelihood, Right Endeavour, Right Memory, Right Meditation. He then expounded to them the other three Truths He had seen under the Bodhi tree: "This, O Bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth of Suffering: birth is suffering; decay is suffering; illness is suffering; death is suffering; presence of objects we hate is suffering; separation from objects we love is suffering; not to obtain what we desire is

¹ All-knowledge.

suffering. Briefly, the fivefold clinging¹ to existence is suffering. This, O Bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth of the cause of suffering: thirst that leads to rebirth, accompanied by pleasure and lust, finding its delights here and there; (this thirst is threefold) namely, thirst for pleasure, thirst for existence, thirst for prosperity. This, O Bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth of the cessation of suffering; (it ceases with) the complete cessation of this thirst—a cessation which consists in the absence of every passion—with the abandoning of this thirst, with the doing away with it, with the deliverance from it, with the destruction of desire.” When the “supreme wheel of the empire of Truth” was thus set rolling, it is recorded that all the Devas, beginning with those of the earth and passing to the seventh, or highest, world, shouted with joy, and cried that none could ever again turn back the wheel.² Yet further He explained to them the difference between the Self and the not-Self, in words

¹ Clinging to the five elements of existence which make the transitory self, the five sheaths.

² The absurd modern idea that a Buddha could deny the existence of the Gods had not then been born, and all the early records are full of their co-operation and rejoicings.

that should for ever have made impossible the contention that He taught that there was no continuing life in man: "The body (rūpa), O Bhikkhus, is not the Self. . . Sensation, O Bhikkhus, is not the Self. . . Perception is not the Self. . . The Samkhāras are not the Self. . . Consciousness is not the Self." Defining each more fully, He declares of each that it "is not mine, is not me, is not my Self; thus it should be remembered by right knowledge according to the truth." And He concludes: "Considering this, O Bhikkhus, a learned, noble hearer of the word becomes weary of body, weary of sensation, weary of perception, weary of the Samkhāras, weary of consciousness. Becoming weary of all that, he divests himself of passion; by absence of passion he is made free; when he is free, he becomes aware that he is free; and he realizes that rebirth is exhausted; that holiness is completed; that duty is fulfilled: that there is no further return to this world." ¹

¹ *Ibid.*, VI. Every student will recognize here the koshas of the Vedānta, noting that the Samkhāras represent the Prānamaya-kosha, sensation and perception the Manomayakosha; the fifth, Ānandamayakosha, is not mentioned, for that film of bliss is not lost even in the Turiya state, obtaining which a man returneth not.

From this time forth, the Lord Buddha preached His doctrine, and men and women became enlightened, obtaining, as He taught, "the pure and spotless Eye of the Truth," the knowledge that all that has a beginning must have an ending; then they surrendered all worldly things and became Bhikkhus, mendicants, putting on the yellow robe, carrying the alms-bowl, taking refuge in the Buddha, in His doctrine and His Order. And the Order grew and multiplied, and after a while the Lord sent out His disciples to teach, and gave them authority to admit to the Sangha (the Order) those who sought entrance, on the triple declaration thrice repeated: "I take my refuge in the Buddha. I take my refuge in the Dhamma. I take my refuge in the Sangha."¹

Dr. Rhys Davids—who is so fascinated by the ethical life of Buddhism, and who so utterly and so strangely resents its inner spirits, and declares that in Buddhist teaching there is no continuing Ego, no development of the eternal and spiritual nature of man—gives us from Buddhagosa's commentary on the first of the Dialogues a most attractive picture of the

¹ *Ibid.*, xiii, 3, 41.

daily round of that holy life. "The Blessed One used to rise up early (*i.e.*, about 5 A.M.), and, out of consideration for his personal attendant, was wont to wash and dress himself, without calling for any assistance. Then, till it was time to go on his round for alms, he would retire to a solitary place and meditate. When that time arrived, he would dress himself completely in the three robes (which every member of the Order wore in public), take his bowl in his hand and, sometimes alone, sometimes attended by his followers, would enter the neighbouring village or town for alms, sometimes in an ordinary way, sometimes wonders happening," recounted at length. Then people would come out and pray Him to accept His food from them, and He would sit down and eat. "Then would the Blessed One, when the meal was done, discourse to them, with due regard to their capacity for spiritual things, in such a way that some would take the layman's vow, and some would enter on the paths, and some would reach the highest fruit thereof. And when he had thus had mercy on the multitude, he would arise from his seat and depart to the place where he had lodged.

And when he had come there, he would sit in the open verandah, awaiting the time when the rest of his followers should also have finished their meal." Then, standing at the door of His room, He would speak a few words of exhortation, and at the request of any disciple would "suggest a subject for meditation, suitable to the spiritual capacity of each." The disciples departing to meditate, the Buddha would rest awhile, and "when his body was rested he would arise from the couch and for a space consider the circumstances of the people near that he might do them good. And at the fall of the day, the folk from the neighbouring villages or town would gather together at the place where he was lodging, bringing with them offerings of flowers. And to them, seated in the lecture hall, would he, in a manner suitable to the occasion, and suitable to their beliefs, discourse of the Truth." Dismissing them, at the close of the day, He would sometimes bathe, and then sit alone, "till the brethren, returned from their meditations, began to assemble. Then some would ask him questions on things that puzzled them, some would speak of their meditations, some

would ask for an exposition of the Truth. Thus would the first watch of the night pass, as the Blessed One satisfied the desire of each, and then they would take their leave. And part of the rest of the night would he spend in meditation, walking up and down outside his chamber: and part he would rest lying down, calm and self-possessed within. And as the day began to dawn, rising from his couch, he would seat himself, and calling up before his mind the folk in the world, he would consider the aspirations which they, in previous births, had formed, and think over the means by which he could help them to attain thereto.”¹

Into the framework of this noble, simple, life, the jewels of the Buddha's teachings were set. In order to appreciate them, we need to remember this environment, to remember that the Buddha was a Hindu speaking to Hindus on matters largely familiar to them, using religious and metaphysical terms in their ordinary accepted meanings, raising no opposition as a heretic—as He assuredly would have done had His teaching been materialistic, as

¹ *Buddhism*, pp. 108-112.

it became later among some non-Hindus, ignorant of the connotation of the terms employed—a Teacher, distinguishable from other teachers of His time by His contemporaries only by the incomparable purity, compassion and wisdom that breathed from His every look, His every word. Dr. Rhys Davids, regarding Buddhism as “diametrically opposed” to Hinduism, regards it as an evidence of wonderful toleration that He was allowed to teach so peacefully. “It is even more than that. Wherever he went, it was precisely the Brahmins themselves who often took the most earnest interest in his speculations, though his rejection of the soul theory and of all that it involved was really incompatible with the whole theology of the Vedas, and therefore with the supremacy of the Brahmins. Many of his chief disciples, many of the most distinguished members of his Order, were Brahmins.”¹ It is more reasonable to suppose, and the supposition is borne out by His recorded sayings, that He met with no opposition just because He did *not* reject the soul theory with ‘all that

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 115.

it involves; and when some of His followers committed this terrible blunder, Buddhism became extinct in India, for never will Hindus accept any so-called religion that casts aside belief in the Gods and in the immortality of man. As Dr. Rhys Davids says: "We should never forget that Gotama was born and brought up and lived and died a Hindu. His teaching, far-reaching and original as it was, and really subversive of the religion of the day, was Indian throughout. Without the intellectual work of his predecessors his own work, however original, would have been impossible.¹ He was no doubt the greatest of them all; and most probably the world will come to acknowledge him as, in many respects, the most intellectual of the religious teachers of mankind. But Buddhism is essentially an Indian system. The Buddha himself was, throughout his career, a characteristic Indian. And, whatever his position as compared with other teachers in the West, we need here only claim for him, that he was the greatest and wisest and best of the Hindus." ²

¹ How then can we be asked to wrench the terms He uses away from all their previous connotations?

² *Op. cit.*, pp. 116, 117.

How continually He spake as Hindu to Hindus, His similes and teachings often show, being drawn from the ancient Scriptures. Take, as illustrations, the three controls of actions, speech, mind and body,¹ drawn from Manu; the sentence: "he who holds back rising anger like a rolling chariot, him I call a real driver; other people are but holding the reins," and the reference to the senses as well-broken horses, recalling the teaching of Yama in the *Kathopanishad*.² The play on the higher and lower self,³ drawn from the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. "All that we are is the result of what we have thought; it is founded on our thoughts, it is made up of our thoughts,"⁴ from the *Chāndogyanishad*. "It is good to control the mind, which is difficult to hold, unstable, and which goes where it pleases,"⁵ a reminiscence of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. But it is useless to multiply instances. Enough that the Great Teacher carefully re-echoed the ancient writings, not as needing them Himself—He who knew all—

¹ *Dhammapada*, 281.

² *Ibid.*, 222, 94.

³ *Ibid.*, 380,

⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁵ *Udānavarga*, xxxi, 1.

but lest the ignorant should be caused to stumble, and turn away from the faith of their fathers.

Let us now turn to the mass of teachings that confronts us, and learn from examples something not only of His precepts, but of His methods. To a remarkable degree they were pointed, they were practical, and addressed to the consciences of His hearers; He never for one moment hesitated to speak in plainest language, in clearest terms, of the faults into which we are betrayed, of the mistakes into which men are constantly falling. For the Buddha was a Teacher indeed, a Teacher whose words illumined the mind. Strong and practical, then, and for the most part it seems as if some passing incident gave the opportunity for a parable or a story bearing an ethical lesson. His Bhikkhus were quarrelling, and as each man quarrelled with his neighbour, his neighbour returned the quarrel, and hatred ruled where peace ought to have been. Then the Buddha called them to Him; and He told them a story; the story of a King of Kāshī who made war against the King of Kosala, a small kingdom, and drove:

him away from his kingdom and took it to himself. The dispossessed King and his wife went and lived in a poor hovel, and there a son was born to them. The barber of the dispossessed King, seeing his former master, and desiring to curry the favour of the conqueror, betrayed to him the fugitive, and the King sent forth and seized the fugitive and his wife and gave them over to the executioner. As they were being led to the place of death, the son, who had been sent away for safety, came and saw his father and mother on their way to execution, and he pressed through the crowd. The father whispered: "My son, be not long, be not short; hatred ceases not by hatred; by non-hatred it ceases"; and he then went on to death; and the son pondered over the father's words, he understood them not. Presently he took service under the King who had slain his mother and father, after reducing them to beggary, and, attracting the King's attention, he was taken as his personal attendant. The King loved the youth, and used to sleep with his head in his lap. As he slept there one day the young prince thought "This King is in my power; he has slain my father

and mother; he has reduced me to misery; he is helpless, I will slay him"; and he drew out his sword. But his father's words came to his mind: "be not short", and he knew it meant: "be not hasty in your action"; he put the sword back and remembered the other words, that hatred ceases not by hatred. The King awoke and said he dreamt that the prince he had dispossessed had slain him, and the youth, drawing his sword, revealed himself and told him that his life was at his mercy. The King prayed for his life, and the prince answered him: "Nay, O King, I have forfeited my life by this threat, and thou must give me back my life and thy pardon." So he gave the King his life, that he could have taken, and the King pardoned the offence and gave him also his life, and then the prince told him of his father's dying words: "My father taught me that I must not be long—I must not keep hatred; I must not be short—I must not be hasty in action. That hatred ceases not by hatred at any time, but hatred ceases by love. For if I had slain thee, thy friends would have slain me in return, and my friends would then have slain thy friends, and so hatred would

not have ceased; but now we have each given to the other his life, and thus hatred ceased by love." Then the disciples became at one amongst themselves, and peace was restored within the Order.

The weeping mother, with dead babe clasped to bosom, is told her child shall be restored to her if she can bring some mustard seed from a house where none has died; the gentle lesson sank more deeply than a hundred sermons.

A man abused Him vehemently as He was preaching the great doctrine: "A man who foolishly does me wrong, I will return to him the protection of my ungrudging love; the more evil comes from him, the more good shall go from me." While a man reproached Him, "Buddha was silent, and would not answer him, pitying his mad folly." The man having finished his abuse, Buddha asked him, saying: "Son, when a man forgets the rules of politeness in making a present to another, the custom is to say, keep your present. Son, you have now railed at me; I decline to entertain your abuse, and request you to keep it, a source of misery to yourself. For as sound belongs to the drum, and shadow to the

substance, so in the end misery will certainly overtake the evil doer." Buddha said: "A wicked man who reproaches a virtuous one, is like one who looks up and spits at Heaven; the spittle soils not the Heaven, but comes back and defiles his own person. So again, he is like one who flings dirt at another, when the wind is contrary; the dirt does but return on him who threw it. The virtuous man cannot be hurt; the misery that the other would inflict comes back on himself." ¹

Sometimes a gleam of humour flashes out, and it is not difficult to picture the scene between the anxious disciple and the gentle, slightly amused, Master: "How are we to conduct ourselves, Lord, with regard to womankind?" "Don't see them, Ānanda." "But if we should see them, what are we to do?" "Abstain from speech, Ānanda." "But if they should speak to us, Lord, what are we to do?" "Keep wide awake, Ānanda."² Keep wide awake; notice what you are doing, guard your thoughts. A long sermon as to the wisdom of guarding himself from being led astray

¹ *The Sūtra of the Forty-two Sections*, translated by S. Beal, from the Chinese. *Catena of Buddhist Scriptures*, pp. 193, 194.

² *Mahā-parinibbāna-Sutta*, 23. Sac. Bks. of the East, vol. xi.

would not have been half as effective as that single sentence, "Keep wide awake, Ānanda."

Among the striking characteristics of His teachings we find the occult fact that evil can only be put an end to by its opposite good: "Let a man overcome anger by love; let him overcome evil by good; let him overcome the greedy by liberality, the liar by truth."¹ A man must be strong and purposeful: "Earnestness is the path of immortality (Nirvāṇa), thoughtlessness the path of death. Those who are in earnest do not die; those who are thoughtless are as if dead already."² Causation is unbroken: "If a man speaks or acts with an evil thought, pain follows him, as the wheel follows the foot of the ox that draws the carriage . . . If a man speaks or acts with a pure thought, happiness follows him, like a shadow that never leaves him."³ "He who has done even a little good finds in this world and in the other happiness and great profit; it is like a seed that has well taken root. . . . He who has done what is evil cannot free

¹ *Dhammapada*, 223.

² *Ibid.*, 21.

³ *Ibid.*, 2.

himself of it; he may have done it long ago or afar off, he may have done it in solitude, but he cannot cast it off, and when it has ripened he cannot cast it off.”¹ Above all, desire must be got rid of, as the root of all sorrow: “From desires comes grief, from desires comes fear; he who is free from desires knows neither grief nor fear . . . It is hard for one who is held by the fetters of desire to free himself of them, says the Blessed One. The steadfast, who care not for the happiness of desires, cast them off and do soon depart . . . As the shoemaker, when he has well prepared his leather, can use it to make shoes, so when one has cast off desires, he has the highest happiness . . . Desires are never satiated; wisdom affords contentment . . . Not even in the pleasures of the Gods does the disciple of the perfect Buddha find pleasure; he rejoices only in the destruction of desires.”² The teaching is pithily summed up: “Avoid doing all wicked actions; practise most perfect virtue; thoroughly subdue your mind; this is the doctrine of the Buddha.”³

¹ *Udānavarga*, xxviii, 25, 30.

² *Ibid.*, ii, 2, 6, 12, 14, 18.

³ *Ibid.*, xxviii, i.

Most important is the teaching of the Buddha on "the subjugation of all the *Āsavas*," of the outgoings of the life in man towards objects of desire. Of these there are seven classes, to be abandoned respectively: (1) by insight—insight into the four noble truths, destroying the delusion of self, hesitation and dependence on external rites; (2) by subjugation—the five senses and the mind; (3) by right use—clothes, alms, and abode, to be used, not delighted in; (4) by endurance—cold and heat, hunger and thirst, gad-flies, mosquitoes, wind, sun, snakes, abusive words, bodily suffering, pains; (5) by avoidance—obvious dangers, improper places and companions; (6) by removal—evil thoughts; (7) by cultivation—the higher wisdom. When all this is done, "he has destroyed that craving Thirst, by thorough penetration of mind he has rolled away every Fetter, and he has made an end of Pain."¹

His ethical teaching was pointed and direct to a rare degree; take for instance this: "The fault of others is easily perceived, but that of oneself is difficult to perceive, a man winnows

¹ *Sabbāsava-Sutta*. Sac. Bks. of the East, vol. xi.

his neighbour's faults like chaff, but his own fault he hides, as a cheat hides the bad die from the gambler. If a man looks after the faults of others, and is always inclined to be offended, his own passions will grow, and he is far from the destruction of passions.”¹

The Buddha was fond of forcing His questioners to answer their own questions. Instead of answering a question, He questioned the questioner. Instead of laying down a doctrine or truth in answer to a question, he gradually led the man stage by stage to answer that question for himself—one of the wisest ways of teaching and the most likely of all ways to make a man realize the truth., Thus, when a young Brāhmana, by name Vāsettha, asked Him whether certain learned Brāhmanas showed the right way of reaching union with Brahmā, the Buddha replied by a series of questions, the answers to which showed that the Brāhmanas neither knew Brahmā nor were like Him, that while versed in the Vedas they were “omitting the practice of those qualities which really make a man a Brāhmana, and adopting the practice of those qualities which

¹ *Dhammapada*, 252, 253, Sac. Bks. of the East, vol. x.

really make men not Brāhmanas," and at this point the Buddha summed up: "that these Brāhmanas, versed in the Vedas and yet bearing anger and malice in their hearts, sinful and uncontrolled, should after death, when the body is dissolved, become united to Brahmā, who is free from anger and malice, sinless, and has self-mastery—such a condition of things has no existence." He then tells the youth that when the Tathāgata was asked the way that leads to the world of Brahmā, He could give the answer: "For Brahmā I know, Vāsettha, and the world of Brahmā, and the path which leadeth unto it. Yea, I know it, even as one who has entered the Brahmā world, and has been born within it." "He, by Himself, thoroughly understands, and sees, as it were, face to face, this universe—the world below with all its spirits, and the world above, of Māra and of Brahmā—and all creatures, Samanas and Brāhmanas, Gods and men, and He then makes His knowledge known to others." When a man is attracted by the truth, and leaves his home, going forth into "the homeless state" and leading a noble and pure life, pervades the

whole world "with heart of Love, far-reaching, grown great and beyond measure," such a man is approaching union with Brahmā; and that he "should after death, when the body is dissolved, become united with Brahmā, who is the same—such a condition of things is every way possible."¹

Here we have the key to all His teachings with regard to the Brāhmanas. Over and over again He says that they are to be treated with respect, that they are to be treated with reverence; but over and over again He also says that He does not call that man a Brāhmana who is vicious, who is uncontrolled, who is greedy, who is full of the vices of the world. So also He says as to His own Bhikshus, that He does not call that man a Bhikshu who wears a yellow robe and whose passions are uncontrolled. For the Buddha was not deceived by outward appearance, nor by the mere look of the outer man; He looked at the heart, and only when the heart was clean would

¹ *Tevijja Sutta*. Sac. Bks. of the East, vol. xi. Here again we notice how the Buddha endorses the occult teachings as to the existence of the Gods, instead of pushing them aside, as the popular view often asserts. Of course, no one with knowledge could take up the modern materialistic idea now fathered on Buddhism.

He admit that the man had the right to bear a sacred name. He demanded, as every great teacher has demanded, that those who bear a sacred name should honour that name by the life they lead, and not bring scandal and discredit upon it by being full of passion and lust, anger and greed. His testimony to what they had been is full of interest. Asked by some Brāhmanas whether the Brāhmanas of His day were like the ancient Brāhmanas, He replied in the negative, and proceeded: "The old sages were self-restrained, penitent; having abandoned the objects of the five senses, they studied their own welfare. There were no cattle for the Brāhmanas, nor gold, nor corn, (but) the riches and corn of meditation were for them, and they kept watch over the best treasure . . . Inviolable were the Brāhmanas, invisible, protected by the Dhamma, no one opposed them (while standing) at the doors of the houses anywhere. For forty-eight years they practised juvenile chastity; the Brāhmanas formerly went in search of science and exemplarily conduct. The Brāhmanas did not marry (a woman belonging to) another (caste), nor did they

buy a wife." They did not kill cows, "our best friends, in which medicines are produced," but sacrificed the gifts made to them. "They were graceful, large, handsome, renowned, Brāhmanas by nature, zealous for their different works; as long as they lived in the world this race prospered. But there was a change in them." They began to covet wealth, they began to slay cows; "there were formerly three diseases: desire, hunger, and decay, but from the slaying of cattle there came ninety-eight." So things went from bad to worse, till "Dhamma being lost, the Suddas and the Vessikas disagreed, the Khattiyas¹ disagreed in manifold ways, the wife despised her husband. The Kshattriyas and the Brāhmanas and those others who had been protected by their castes, after doing away with their disputes on descent, fell into the power of sensual pleasures."² How lofty was the opinion held by the Buddha of the true Brāhmana may be read in the closing shlokas of the *Dhammapada*, in which, after giving the characteristics of the true

¹ Shūdras, Vaishyas, and Kshattriyas.

² *Brahmanadhammikasutta*, in the *Sutta-nipāta*, trans. from the Pāli by V. Fausböll. Sac. Bks. of the East, vol. x, pt. ii.

Brāhmana He concludes: "Him I call indeed a Brāhmana whose path the Gods do not know, nor spirits (Gandharvas), nor men, when passions are extinct, and who is an Arhat (venerable). Him I call indeed a Brāhmana who calls nothing his own, whether it be before, behind, or between, who is poor, and free from the love of the world. Him I call indeed a Brāhmana, the manly, the noble, the hero, the great sage, the conqueror, the impassable, the accomplished, the awakened. Him I call indeed a Brāhmana who knows his former abodes, who sees heaven and hell, has reached the end of birth, is perfect in knowledge, a sage, and whose perfections are all perfect."¹ The Buddha re-affirmed the ancient ideal, the essence of caste consisting in spiritual development, and if He declared that "a man does not become a Brāhmana by his platted hair, by his family, or by birth,"² He only declared what Manu had taught when the caste-system was ordained. Similarly He declared of His own monks: "A man is not a mendicant (Bhikshu) simply because he asks

¹ *Dhammapada*, 420-423.

² *Ibid.*, 393.

others for alms; he who adopts the whole law is a Bhikshu, not he who only begs. He who is above good and evil, who is chaste, who with knowledge passes through the world, he indeed is called a Bhikshu." "Many men whose shoulders are covered with the yellow gown are ill-conditioned and unrestrained; such evil-doers by their evil deeds go to hell."¹ In the *Udānavarga* the Tibetan recension of the *Dhammapada*, a chapter is devoted to the Brāhmana, and he is described as one who "is righteous, controlled, quiet, restrained, leading a life of holiness, (brahmacharya), who neither harms nor kills any living thing." He "has reached the perfection (set forth in) the Vedas," he "is on the way to Nirvāna," he "has now a body for the last time," he "is tolerant with the intolerant," he "has crossed the stream."²

There is the ideal of the Brāhmana taught by the Buddha. There is the description of what the name should carry with it; and I appeal to the ancient Hindu Scriptures which endorse that contention. I appeal to such

¹ *Ibid.*, 266, 267, 307.

² *Op. cit.*, xxxiii. Trübner's Oriental Series Trans. from the Tibetan by W. W. Rockhill.

books as the *Mahābhārata*, which contain exactly the same line of thought, and to the words of Manu, that the Brāhmana without the qualities of the Brāhmana was like "an elephant of wood and antelope of leather," the mere outward appearance of the thing, and not the reality. It is no more reasonable to speak of the Buddha as antagonistic to the Brāhamanas than to speak of Manu in exactly the same words, for both taught the same truth, that a man must have the inner life before he was worthy of the name. And if it be said, as I hear Hindus say, that he desired to abolish the Brāhmana caste because he thus pointed out the evil lives of Brāhmanas, then we shall have to argue that He wished to abolish His own order of Bhikshus, because He declared that the yellow robe did not make the Bhikshu, but that there must be self-restraint, pure life, and the absence of worldly wealth. To represent the Buddha as an enemy of Brāhmanas and as seeking to destroy them as a caste, when all that He did was to hold up the ancient ideal and to reproach those whose lives dishonoured it, is a perversion of facts. Had He succeeded in purifying the

caste, He would thus have restored it to its ancient splendour; but He failed, alas! and its own poor ideals are hurrying it towards a self-chosen extinction. The occultist can but hold up the immortal ideal, and if men, rejecting it, perish, they perish.

Touching the Gods, the Buddha did not take the position often ascribed to Him, a position impossible to One who knew all worlds. He says that He Himself has visited all the worlds of the Gods, and therefore that He knows the way to them and is able to guide men along the path. And on one occasion when He was asked the way to the world of Brahmā, He answered by asking the man whether he did not know the way to his own village, and whether he could not direct thither the wayfarer. The man answered that he was born there, and knew the way that led to it; so also, replied the Buddha, did He know the world of Brahmā having visited it and being familiar with it.¹

We find frequent references to the Gods, endorsing the beliefs of the Hindus He

¹ See *ante*, the answer to Vāsettha.

addressed: "By earnestness did Maghavan¹ rise to the lordship of the Gods." "The disciple will overcome the earth, and the world of Yama, and the world of the Gods." "The Gods even envy him whose senses, like horses well broken in by the driver, have been subdued." (Note the simile taken from the *Kathopanishad*.) "Let us live happily then, though we call nothing our own. We shall be like the bright Gods, feeding on happiness." "Speak the truth, do not yield to anger, give if thou art asked for little; by these three steps thou wilt go near the Gods."² In the Southern Church the belief in the Gods seems to have disappeared, but man's ineradicable need to worship re-appears in the adoration paid to the Buddha Himself. In the northern Church, less injured by materialism, the worship of the Gods survives, and they are worshipped under their Hindu names. There also we find the Trimūrti re-appearing under Buddhist names: Shiva represented by Amitābha, the Boundless Light, Vishnu by Padmapāni, otherwise Avalokiteshvara; the Third being Manjushri, "the

¹ Indra.

² *Dhammapada*, 30, 43, 24, 197, 224.

representative of creative wisdom, corresponding to Brahmā.”¹

Closely allied to the conception of the great hierarchies of Gods, are the ideas of “heaven” and “hell,” regions of the world invisible through which man passes when out of the physical body—Devachan and part of Kāma Loka, the Theosophist calls them. The Buddha by no means ignored these states; in fact, we find Him describing both at length; many hells are mentioned in some detail by Him in the *Mahāvagga*, in connexion with the *post mortem* fate of one of His Bhikshus; again, in the *Mahā-parinibbāna-sutta*, He declares of the wrongdoer: “on the dissolution of the body, after death, he is reborn into some unhappy state of suffering or woe,” while the well-doer, under similar conditions, “is reborn into some happy state in heaven.”² The northern Church Scriptures have very full accounts of the invisible worlds: there is the Kāma Loka, consisting of the earth and the four lower heavens, the abodes of Devas, Asuras, demons, beasts and men (the physical

¹ Sanskrit-Chinese Dictionary, Eitel, *sub voce*.

² *Op. cit.*, i, 28, 24.

and astral planes); then comes the abode of Māra (astral) and the eighteen heavens of the Rūpa Loka (Rūpa Devachan or Svarga); and beyond these the Arūpa Loka of four heavens, “an ecstatic state of real existence; here dwell those disciples of Buddha who have not attained the imperishable nature.” Beyond this is Nirvāna.¹ In regard to this, as with regard to some other of the more occult truths, the Scriptures of the northern Church seem to be fuller than those of the southern; the traditions of the Arhats, to whom the Buddha gave in His old age the secret teachings, were carried into Tibet and China when the Buddhists fled away from India, and were there faithfully preserved.

His view of the so-called miraculous powers is recorded in the *Surangama Sūtra*,² where the Buddha is recorded to have said that by practising Samādhi without any reliance on Bodhi—*i.e.*, seeking the Siddhis rather than Jñāna³—men attained the power of flying through space, of invisibility, etc., and attained

¹ *Catena of Buddhist Scriptures*. Summarized from Chinese Scriptures, pp. 89-91.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31.

³ Seeking powers rather than wisdom.

various degrees of sublime knowledge but not reaching wisdom, they were still bound to the wheel of transmigration.

Much controversy has arisen over the apparent denial, by the southern Church, of a continuing Ego, passing from life to life. Such Orientalists as Dr. Rhys Davids insist on it, and much of the popular Hindu distrust of Buddhists arises from the general belief that they do not believe in the Ego. The teachings of the Buddha Himself, however, are clear enough. Thus—when asked about some of His disciples who had died, “where has he been reborn and what is his destiny?”—He answered that one had reached emancipation; another “has become a Saka-dāgāmin, who on his first return to this world will make an end of sorrow;” another was “no longer liable to be reborn in a state of suffering;” in all these cases, a persisting individuality is obviously taken for granted. A disciple may say of himself: “Hell is destroyed for me; and rebirth as an animal, or a ghost, or in any place of woe. I am converted; I am no longer liable to be reborn in a state of suffering, and am assured of final

salvation.”¹ So also He said that those who died while “they with believing heart, are journeying on such pilgrimage, shall be re-born, after death, when the body is dissolved, in the happy realms of heaven.”² The doctrine of the Self from the Vinaya has already been quoted. And we find Him saying, like any other Hindu: “For Self is the lord of self; Self is the refuge of self”³ a sentence meaningless if there be no Self.

In fact the whole teaching loses its reasonableness and falls into ruins, if the fundamental teaching be withdrawn of an Ego that passes from birth to birth in the cycle of reincarnation, and emerges in the Self when emancipation is gained. This is the Hindu teaching, and the Buddha built His teachings on its universal acceptance among His hearers. In the northern Church the doctrine remained unchallenged of the “true man without a position”; the Lin-tsi School teach: “Within the body which admits sensations, acquires

¹ *Mahā-parinibbāna-suttā*, ii, 6-10.

² *Ibid.*, v, 22. The pilgrimage is to any one of the four places at which the Buddha was respectively born, reached illumination, founded the kingdom of truth, and died.

³ *Dhammapada*, 380.

knowledge, thinks and acts, [compare the statement regarding the Self in the Vinaya] there is the 'true man without a position,' Wu-wei-chenjen. He makes himself clearly visible; not the thinnest separating film hides him. Why do you not recognize him? The invisible power of the mind permeates every part . . . This is Buddha, the Buddha with you."¹

Next should be considered His teaching of "the path," which depends entirely upon the continuity of life. The Path, in Buddhism, has the same stages as those given by Shri Shankarāchārya, both as to the preliminary path and the path itself. The Buddha asks from His disciples, as the first qualification, that opening of the mind which is identical with discrimination, or Viveka, discrimination between the permanent and the impermanent; the second step is that regarding action, which teaches indifference to the fruits of action, and is identical with Vairāgya; then follow the six qualities of the mind, the same six recounted the day before yesterday in speaking of the same path as taught in Hinduism; fourthly, the deep longing for liberation, the

¹ *Chinese Buddhism*, pp. 163, 464.

same as Mumukshā; and lastly, the gotrabhū, the same as the adhikāri, when the man is ready for Initiation. After Initiation comes the path itself, traced in the following quotation, which begins at the highest stage and follows it backward. "Buddha said: The Rahat [Arhat] is able to fly through the air, change his appearance, fix the years of his life, shake heaven and earth. The successive stages towards this condition of being are: The Anāgāmin, who, at the expiration of his life (years) ascends in a spiritual form to the nineteen heavens, and in one of these completes his destiny, by becoming a Rahat. Next is the condition of a Sakridāgāmin, in which, after one birth and death, a man becomes a Rahat. Next, the condition of a Srotāpanna, in which, after seven births and deaths, a man becomes a Rahat. These are they who, having entirely separated themselves from all desire and lust, are like branches of a tree, cut off and dead." ¹

Thus the Buddha taught His disciples, as the Scriptures still record, and we have the right to use these Scriptures against the

¹ *Sūtra of the Forty-two Sections. Chinese Buddhism*, 191.

misconceptions of those who, materialized in their own thought, are impatient of the verities of the world invisible.

Arhatship was the last step ere attaining complete liberation, and gaining the Nirvānic consciousness. The teaching of the Buddha as to Nirvāna is, perhaps, the clearest on record, being positive instead of, as is usual, negative. Having said that the Bhikshu should concentrate within himself all his mental faculties, "as the tortoise draws its body into its shell," the Lord proceeds to tell of Nirvāna; "Bhikshus, the uncreated, the invisible, the unmade, the elementary, the unproduced, exist (as well as) the created, the visible, the made, the conceivable, the compound, the produced; and there is an uninterrupted connexion between the two. Bhikshus, if the uncreated, the invisible, the unmade, the elementary, the unproduced, was nonentity, I could not say that the result of their connexion from cause to effect with the created, the visible, the made, the compound, the conceivable, was final emancipation. . . The impermanency of the created, the visible, the made, the produced, the compound, the great torment of subjection to old

age, death, and ignorance, what proceeds from the cause of eating; (all this) is destroyed, and there is found no delight in it; this is the essential feature of final emancipation. Then there will be no doubts and scruples; all sources of suffering will be stopped, and one will have the happiness of the peace of the Samskāra. . . This is the chief (beatitude) of those who have reached the end, perfect and unsurpassable peace, the destruction of all characteristics, the perfection of perfect purity, the annihilation of death.”¹ Such is His description of a state in which He ever dwelt, whether in or out of the body; yet we find people who instead of believing in the annihilation of death, believe in the annihilation of life in Nirvāna. I know no Scripture in which the truth as to Nirvāna is put as plainly as it is here. It is existence, and not non-existence; it is reality, and not non-reality; it is permanency, and not transitoriness. What is meant by “Nirvāna,” by the “going out” implied in the name, is, He declares, the going out of all these impermanent things; these disappear, and then man attains his final emancipation.

¹ *Udānavarga*, xxvi, 1, 21, 22, 24, 31.

For forty-five years did the Lord Buddha wander over Northern India, teaching, until His work was done and He came to the laying aside of His body. A strange story is attached to His outgoing, significant enough in the old days, but read in a literal sense in these modern days, by those who eat pigs. Chunda, a worker in metals, shortly after the Buddha had announced His approaching departure, offered Him His daily meal and prepared dried boar's flesh, sweet rice and cakes. The Lord bade Chunda serve Him only with the boar's flesh, giving the rice and cakes to the disciples, and bade him bury what of the boar's flesh remained; for "I see no one, Chunda, on earth, nor in Māra's heaven, nor in Brahmā's heaven, no one among Samanas and Brāhmanas, among Gods and men, by whom, when he has eaten it, that food can be assimilated, save by the Tathāgata."¹ Surely such words are enough to show that the "boar's flesh" was not physical food, such as men who live on flesh assimilate without difficulty. After eating, He taught, and then sickness fell on Him and great pain; He bore it calmly, and

¹ *Mahā-parinibbāna-sutta*, 19.

recovering, went on His way. That same day His skin was observed to shine with exceeding splendour, and He told Ānanda that it was the sign of his departing that night, and lying down, He rested for awhile, and arising, went to the Sāla grove of the Mallas and lay between the twin Sāla trees, with His head to the north; the trees showered on Him their flowers, and heavenly flowers fell, and heavenly music sounded, in homage to the dying Lord, but He spake to Ānanda and said that while such homage was due to Him, yet worthier was the homage paid by the pure and noble man or woman who obeyed His law. All the Devas of the worlds gathered, and crowds of men came to pay their last homage, and the Buddha made His last Arhat, the mendicant Sabhadda; five hundred disciples stood round him at the ending, and he spake his last words: "Behold now, brethren, I exhort you, saying: Decay is inherent in all component things. Work out your salvation with diligence." Then silence fell, and He passed into deepest meditation, and returned not.

As a king of kings, His body was prepared for the burning, and was laid on a pyre of all.

fragrant woods; it left no ash, but the bones remained. These were divided as sacred relics, and carried away in eight portions, each to be placed under a Thūpa, and a ninth Thūpa was erected over the vessel in which His body had been burned, and a tenth, by the Moriyas, over the embers of His funeral pile. So ended the noblest life yet lived by one of our humanity, the first who on this globe has attained Buddhahood. "Bow down with clasped hands! Hard, hard is a Buddha to meet with, through hundreds of ages!"¹

There is no time to trace the later growth of Buddhism, the development of its different schools of Philosophy, the arising of noble teachers trained in its wisdom, the materializing of the faith that followed its introduction among less developed and less metaphysically inclined people, and its maintenance in its original purity in its esoteric schools. Enough has been said of the saying of the Buddha Himself to substantiate my position as to the identity of the teachings and the training in Hinduism and Buddhism, and to justify my

¹ The closing words of the *Mahā-parinibbāna-sutta*, from which the above account of his departure is summarized, any passages in inverted commas being textual quotations.

plea for love and amity between the two faiths that belong to the Hindu people, and are the glory of the Hindu race. This teaching of the Buddha, of the Mighty, of the Enlightened One, who, first of all in our humanity, climbed the ladder of Buddhahood, is the ancient teaching reproclaimed. There are hatred and division too often between Hinduism and Buddhism; there are suspicion and doubt and antagonism, which have made a great gulf between the two mighty religions, and men will not try to bridge it either on the one side or on the other. Yet the Teachers of both belong to the same Brotherhood; the disciples of both are going towards the same Brotherhood; there is no difference there between the Hindu Master and the Buddhist Master, for both teach the same essential verities, and have come along the path common to both religions. Born on Indian soil, speaking with Indian lips, reproducing the noblest moralities of the Hindu Scriptures, recognizing the Hindu Gods, the Buddha is still rejected by the Indian people as a Teacher, though inconsistently worshipped as an Avatāra by many of the orthodox Hindus. Why should there

be enmity instead of brotherhood, why should there be suspicion and hatred instead of peace? This mighty religion that moulds so many million minds, this noble philosophy that trains so many million intellects, this life—the most perfect in its details of which there is any record amongst the histories of men, evolved in our race—why should you exclude them from your sympathy, why withhold from them your reverence and your love? The Buddha comes to you, a man of your own race, the glory of the Hindu nation, born in the Kshattriya caste, belonging to the Āryan people, teaching the ancient truths in a new form, and making them ready for the training of vaster multitudes. He is ours, as He is also the world's greatest among its teachers, purest and fairest of all the blossoms of humanity, this flower flowered on the Indian soil, this teacher spake the Indian tongue, and loved the Indian people. He taught them, He worked for them, He healed them, instructed them; and then His compassion flowed outwards, overflowed the worlds. Then surely we may reverence Him, the Blessed One, the Lord, the Teacher. He is admitted

to be Teacher among the Gods; he may well also be done homage to as Teacher among men.

Hinduism and Buddhism would do well if—mother and daughter—they rushed together again in a motherly and filial embrace, and forgot in that embrace the history of their estrangement, forgot in that embrace the history of their long separation. Then would the Indian home again be at one, one roof-tree covering mother and daughter alike, thus able to influence the western world with one lip and with one tongue, helping forward the redemption of that humanity of which the Buddha was born, and for which He lived. Let all re-echo the words which close the account of His departure: "Bow down with clasped hands! Hard, hard is a Buddha to meet with through hundreds of ages!"

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